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## **Governor Doyle Signs His Emergency Heating Assistance Package for Working Families**

### ***Residents May Begin Applying for Heating Assistance Today***

MILWAUKEE - Governor Jim Doyle today signed legislation to provide assistance to up to 40,000 hard-working families across Wisconsin, who are being squeezed by the high cost of heating bills this winter. The \$6 million assistance package, which passed the Legislature last week as part of a Special Session called by Governor Doyle, will provide eligible families with about \$200 to help with their heating bills.

"This is a victory for thousands of hard-working families across Wisconsin who are being squeezed by sky-high heating bills this winter," said Governor Doyle. "I believe that making life in Wisconsin more affordable is one of our most important responsibilities. I am pleased that Democrats and Republicans in the Legislature acted on my proposal to provide emergency assistance."

The emergency heating assistance package, which Governor Doyle first proposed during his State of the State address this year, will help those families who are slightly above the current cutoff for low income energy assistance (150 percent of the federal poverty rate)—or 175 percent of the federal poverty rate. Now a family of four making up to \$33,862 a year is eligible for assistance. Eligible families can apply at local county energy assistance offices and will receive their assistance check after May 15<sup>th</sup>. Governor Doyle is working with utilities so that no one who is waiting for assistance will have their heat shut off.

Heating costs in Wisconsin have gone up as much as 30 percent this year, and utility companies are seeing a nearly 10 percent rise in the number of people who can't pay their bills.

Recognizing that energy costs were going to be a tremendous burden this winter, Governor Doyle announced last fall his Energy Help initiative, which doubled the State's commitment to low income energy assistance, providing \$16 million in additional funds for bill payment assistance.

After the Governor signed the new legislation at the Social Development Commission, a number of eligible Milwaukee residents signed up for assistance. Residents throughout the state can obtain information on where to apply by visiting the web site the Governor created [energyhelp.wi.gov](http://energyhelp.wi.gov) or by calling a toll free number, 1-800-522-3014.